

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STOCKH 01530 181533Z
ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SW, VM
SUBJECT: SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS SAIGON

1. FM KARIN SODER, WHO IS PRESENTLY ON A GOOD WILL VISIT TO VIETNAM, SPENT FRIDAY, APRIL 14, IN THE SAIGON AREA. THE SAIGON STOPOVER WAS ADDED ONLY ON THE INSISTENCE OF THE SWEDISH SIDE. THE VIETNAMESE APPEAR ANXIOUS TO APPEASE THE SWEDES WHOSE RUMBLINGS WITH REGARD TO DELAYS AND COST OVERRUNS AT THE SWEDISH-FINANCED BAI BANG PAPER MILL PROJECT NO DOUBT REACHED VIETNAMESE EARS.

2. THE SAIGON VISIT WAS REplete WITH ALL THE BIZARRE TRAPPINGS OF AN INSECURE POLICE STATE, ACCORDING TO REPORTERS ACCOMPANYING THE SODER MISSION. IT INCLUDED CLOSE SUPERVISION OF THE SODER PARTY THE ENTIRE TIME IN SAIGON, HEAVILY ARMED POLICE ESCORTS, LOCKED HOTEL ROOMS AT NIGHT, AND INTERRUPTED PHONE CONVERSATIONS.

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PAGE 02 STOCKH 01530 181533Z

3. MRS. SODER MET IN SAIGON WITH MAYOR VU DINH LIEU. LIEU NOTED THE UNSTABLE SITUATION, ATTRIBUTING IT TO PROBLEMS INSTITUTING A NEW ECONOMIC ORDER. PRIVATE SHOPS HAD JUST BEEN ORDERED SHUT THROUGHOUT THE SAIGON AREA. (REPORTS SAID SOME 30,000 SMALL BUSINESSMEN WERE AFFECTED.) LIEU CONFIDED TO MRS. SODER THAT IT WOULD TAKE AT LEAST TWENTY YEARS TO CREATE A SOCIALIST STATE IN

SOUTH VIETNAM.

4. MRS. SODER'S SCHEDULE IN SAIGON ALSO INCLUDED A SESSION WITH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HO CHI MINH CITY REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE, A TOUR OF THE VICASA STEEL MILL (AT WHICH SWEDISH BOFORS COMPANY MAY SET UP A SPECIALTY STEEL PRODUCTION LINE), A VISIT TO A REHABILITATION CENTER FOR FORMER PROSTITUTES, A TEXTILE FACTORY, AND A REST STOP AT VUNG TAU.

5. COMMENT: THE SAIGON STOPOVER PROVIDED THE FIRST HINT OF "TROUBLE IN PARADISE" ALONG MRS. SODER'S ROUTE. HER EARLIER STOPOVER IN HUE HAD BEEN PORTRAYED IN IDYLIC TERMS. EVEN AT BAI BANG, THE TENDENCY WAS TO GLOSS OVER THE WELL-KNOWN DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY THE LARGEST-EVER SWEDISH AID PROJECT. THERE MRS. SODER, WHILE INDICATING THAT SWEDEN WILL HAVE TO KEEP CLOSE WATCH ON ITS AID BUDGET, WAS HEARD TO SAY THAT SWEDEN TOO HAS ITS COST-OVERRIDDEN BAI BANGS.
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